

New York - 4 Decem<sup>r</sup>. 1847.

My dear Gray,

Your letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> I have received within a quarter of an hour, & prefer replying to it from the C<sup>o</sup>. to neglecting it, for even 24 hours, so keenly alive am I to the kind & friendly proposal which it contains, & to which I give the first attention, (tho' last in the order of your letter) since it is uppermost in my thoughts.

"Which will you take, the honour or the labour" ?

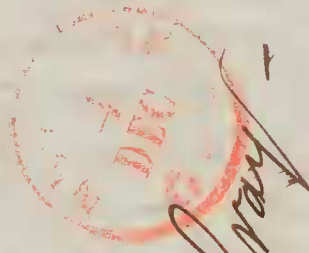
Without electing either, or declining both, I will tell you what passes in my mind, without a reserve, which is truly my wont in dealing with you - First, as to the labour - Whatever might be my wishes, I could not attend to the matter until Mr. Kingsford's return (I suppose 3 or 4 weeks hence) as the growing infirmity in my right eye renders it quite useless in the evening, & the bettermost one commends it plainly of having double work to do; & instead of looking sharper into things, takes the opportunity of performing its own share very indifferently - This w<sup>d</sup> worry my spirits greatly, had I not other, & very significant tokens, that I am well nigh "used up" - In addition to the required delay, which w<sup>d</sup> be prejudicial, I can hardly reconcile it to my ideas of perfect candour, to sit down in deliberate censure upon a work of which I have so great an antecedent knowledge - True it is, that it owes none of its' great merits & superiority to me; but I have been too much behind the scenes; & have already approved, in the abstract, what I could now only commend in the concrete - In any other view of the case, I should rather like the job, because, tho' others might review the work more philosophically, yet none would take more pains to bring forward the excellencies & value of it - And now as to the honour. If I seek to divert you from your "stray wish" so kindly cherished, it is not that I am indifferent to the proposition, for unexpected as it is, few things w<sup>d</sup> give me more satisfaction than to see my name (botanically) "in glory's niche"

thro' your friendly instrumentality - Truly your dedication wd do more for my renown as a naturalist, both now & hereafter, than any thing which I have ever done, or could do to establish it - I say not this in "mock modesty", but in a sober conviction of its truth; & altho' few men care less than myself for the opinions of "the Sovereign People" yet I should derive a satisfaction, which I venture to hope has a higher source than mere vulgar personal vanity, in seeing my name prefixed to pages designed for the perusal of a class whose good opinion may be esteemed an honour by all well regulated minds, however constitutionally lofty. I hardly care to express how much this feeling wd be enhanced, at a public recognition of a friendship, of which I shall only say that I do not undervalue it. This is a strain which I never employ in writing to you, because we misunderstand each other; & in whatever other respects we may entertain different opinions, we at least rely with equal & entire confidence upon each other - And now having most truly expressed to you my inmost feelings, on this subject, I proceed to recommend you to dedicate the Manual to our good friend Torrey - Do you not think he will expect it? And, having reference to what you have told me as to what has passed between you on the subject, do you not think it would prevent the possibility of any little soreness (on the score of authorship) which he might feel, in seeing that you dissent from very many of his (so recently published) determinations? True it is that Torrey is too sincere & candid a man to take undesigned offence, but I believe him altogether superior to petty jealousies, & moreover your warm & faithful personal friend, but the very "best of men" (amongst whom I rank Torrey) are but men at the best" & altho' I anticipate no wounds requiring an emollient ointment, yet this dedication would be a little friendly adhesive plaster which would not allow even a pimple to break out beneath it - There is a professional figure for you! - After what I have said above, you will not suspect me of coquettishly rejecting what I earnestly desire, for I have, in all truth & frankness, admitted that it would be most gratifying to me (more than commonly so) to receive your dedication, did I not think that, for the reasons I have given, it had better be conferred upon Torrey, who cannot be more, & I trust will be as much pleased with it, as I myself should have been - As between ourselves, your

expressed intention demands my warmest thanks, which I may run to accept, & to receive my self - & resting good advice, as the best immediate acknowledgment of your friendly purpose.

I rec<sup>d</sup>, 2 days since, a sheet-ful from Mr. L. F. - If hereafter, I should think it due to my own respectability as a friend, to notice it, I shall send my answer thro' you, open. His letter you shall see the first time I send you a pack of to you, as it is not worth double postage to you - It is just such a letter as I should expect from such a man - The first page entirely reprobatory, excuses for not coming to see me - the rest of his own doings in Carex - his "claims" &c. to which I shall yet no doubt "do justice" &c. & begging for his C. Fuch. as tho' I do not the circumstances of the case, were eventually to determine the question. A most odd, & italic line conveys the idea (whether designed or not) that in species which he had studied, there was no chance of an alteration in his opinions, nor room for any one else to form contrary ones - <sup>It</sup> appears to me a most remarkably compound of meanness & conceit. As to the question itself, it is merely simply - What was the orig<sup>l</sup> C. leptosticta of Schreb.? and from you I learnt that it was our old C. bullata, & (oddly enough) I believe in this only instance, you wrote out the Syn<sup>y</sup> for me, with your own hand - Now, notwithstanding what F. says, I believe it will turn out, as you <sup>said</sup> ~~say~~; because your recollection sets our ears, & further, because I suspect that the true C. bullata, Schk. is a northern plant, & less likely to have come into the hands of Schreb. than the other species; with the large inflated perig<sup>a</sup> - I know that the evidence of Torr. H. F. is against this - but we saw at the time, that his disposition of the species was at variance with Baett's & F.'s - However, as Baett wishes me to look into other matters in Torrey's Collec<sup>u</sup>, for his information, I have thoughts of borrowing it, when Mr. K. returns from Engl<sup>d</sup>; & I shall then see how the real case stands as to our high-minded friend's species - Till then, his letter may cool on my file, & I also shall have the advantage of forgetting it, & him - In the meantime if he, or other impertinents make application to you, in the matter of species, do not suffer yourself to be plagued with them; but just refer them to me as the only responsible expositor of my own affairs - I did not give you any particulars as to C. gracilis, because I mean to send you Mr. Baett's letter (treasure!) for perusal - It would appear that it will have to be C. tenella after all.

I am glad you sent the enum. Car. to Prout, as he will get it free of charge, & earlier than from hence - I hope to send him some specimens he wants by the next steamer, & we shall then possess his valuable spores & dissepiments, as to my late doings, which (strange to say) I have already half forgotten myself! Is it not ridiculous? or rather, is it not melancholy to find one's recollection failing to such an extent? I note what you say about Sporobolus & will not make myself "a goose" by looking for what does not exist. It will be hard to distinguish the genera in an early state, & as to habit, Sporobolus - (Tomey's species, found by Oakes) looks, if my memory serves me aright, very like *Nitpa longifol.* &c. - But if you say the genera are good, why I even say so too, being only too proud of the honour of saying "ditto to Mr. Burke" - I had no doubt as to the correctness of your views as to the Peris. of *Cerex*, but there are some objections



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I reserve this conspicuous place to send my best love to your lady & more by token that the right of the love itself will find you in good humour for the contents of the sheet - All this very without my say being in the remaining sheets of the papers, for which, on any hands, now, & (probably) of a still more beautiful.

Yours & I love with  
 Johnson

to the theory in my mind - However, if it be a *res judicata*, as you say - why, there are ends. As to Fendler's collection I will see Sam. to night, & hear what he says - I am glad, on all apts. that the poor fellow has escaped - With respect to myself, I should, of course, like to subscribe for one of the fullest sets, but at present must forego the wish, as it wd not be prudent - My views, as to the future, being unchanged, are of course dark enough, but if any thing brighter should turn up between this & the Spring (a very unlikely thing) future chances, now rendered more probable, may enable me to obtain these plants, but the other alternative I contemplate, by cutting me off alike from Botany & Botanists wd render the privation a matter of no moment - No more of this, however. You shall know my brother's determination when I next have occasion to write, which will be no doubt shortly (on some plea or other) - I am very dear, very truly, Wm. Douglas